

THIS NUMBER CONTAINS

# AN INVENTION OF THE ENEMY.

By WILLIAM H. BABCOCK.

COMPLETE.

ALSO, PART THREE OF

## GEORGE W. CHILDS'S RECOLLECTIONS.

AUGUST, 1889

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## PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

**S**IMPLICITY is often an attribute of genius, and, while Lincoln was surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance of war, those near him never forgot a certain unvarying gentleness of manner, and the unaffected earnestness and simplicity with which he greeted those with whom he was daily thrown in contact. His manners came from the abounding sincerity and the soul of considerate gentleness and goodness within the man.

"Politeness" he called "benevolence well expressed."

Bancroft spoke of his "wanness of heart,"—a comprehensive expression for the underlying sadness and tenderness of his nature. His inexhaustible fund of stories was only a foil to his intense thoughtfulness, and the bubbling fun in him, as frequent as the gravel in a fountain of July, was only a thin partition to divide the work-day world from the deep under-current of his melancholy nature.

"Levity," Madame de Staël says, "takes away from sentiment its depth, from attention its force, and from thought its originality." But when the most serious disquisitions about the doubtful financial state of the country, with Secretary Chase, often reminded Mr. Lincoln of a story, which he would proceed to tell his serious and solicitous Secretary of the Treasury, the quaint wisdom of the President did not seem like levity. His stories generally pointed a moral, as well as adorned the tale. I saw him often, and Shakespeare's lines always seemed happily to characterize the great patient and many-sided statesman :

Consideration like an angel came  
And whipped the offending Adam out of him.

With Lincoln the exercise of great privileges was ever accompanied by an overwhelming sense of his obligations to the people who placed him in office, and there was also a constant and pathetic consciousness that it was no part of his duty or destiny to elevate himself, but that his "charge to keep" was not to aggrandize himself, but to bless, to benefit, and to take away the burdens from mankind.

Mr. Lincoln's favorite place was the East Room up-stairs in the White House, overlooking the Potomac. Here he could be found as early as nine o'clock in the morning,—in the same room occupied under Garfield and under Arthur and Harrison by their private secretaries.

Here Secretaries Seward and Stanton spent many hours, and on Sunday mornings, at ten o'clock, it was Lincoln's habit to get shaved by his favorite barber, in front of a great open fireplace, which is still there. The grate usually blazed with generous hickory logs, and while the barber performed his duty the statesmen discussed the Schleswig-Holstein question, or the probability that Palmerston would drag his government into the tripartite alliance, which sought, under the French "Man of December," to carry the eagles of France into the halls of the Montezumas. Lincoln made no secret of his having written a personal letter to Queen Victoria, which he always asserted tided the country

safely past the dangerous quicksands of diplomacy threatening to involve the United States in a war with England as a result of the seizure on the high seas of Mason and Slidell.

Nothing angered Salmon P. Chase, who was as destitute of humor as Lincoln's War Minister, more than the President's propensity to be reminded of a joke in the midst of the most delicate and difficult cares and anxieties of state. No matter how earnest or anxious Mr. Chase might be to discuss "the question before the House," the President would first tell his story ; and it always fitted the matter in hand. Mr. Seward's sense of humor was keen and subtle. But Chase, and Bates of Missouri, Blair, and Stanton, hated a joke as a ferret hates a rat ! Henry Winter Davis, one of Mr. Lincoln's bitterest foes during Reconstruction days, was almost utterly destitute of humor, but he was a statesman of lofty intellect and of incorruptible character.

To Abraham Lincoln Artemus Ward's book was a never-failing fountain of fun. Of the quaint spelling and the side-splitting jokes in A. Ward's compendium of humor the President liked to talk with the grave Stanton, to whom fun was a mere waste of raw material.

On a certain Sunday, always Lincoln's day for relaxation, he said, "Stanton, I find a heap of fun in A. Ward's book."

"Yes," said Stanton, dryly ; "but what do you think of that chapter in which he makes fun of you ?"

Mr. Lincoln quickly replied, "Stanton, to save my life, I never could see any humor in that chapter."

The heroism of our soldiers was a theme of which he never wearied. Of General Banks, of Massachusetts, he said, "Banks gives me less trouble than any general in the army in active service."

General James Wadsworth, of New York, was shot and killed while on horseback leading his brigade, sword in hand, in the bloodiest battle of the Wilderness. And of this noble soldier Mr. Lincoln recalled to my memory the fact that after the death of General Wadsworth there was found Mr. Lincoln's own letter, stained with the dead soldier's blood, in which the President had written these words : "We have clothed the black soldier in the uniform of the United States. We have made him a soldier. He has fought for his right to be a citizen. He has won it with his blood. It cannot be taken away from him." And, taking from his pocket a poem of a forgotten English writer, William North by name, he read these lines as a tribute to General Wadsworth :

Time was when he who won his spurs of gold  
From royal hands must woo the knightly state.  
The knell of old formalities is tolled,  
And the world's knights are now self-consecrate.

The doors of the Temple of Justice were always open to the eyes and mind of Abraham Lincoln. To him Justice was neither one-eyed nor blind nor blindfolded.

A Congressman called at the White House, representing a district not many miles away from Philadelphia, in great perturbation of spirit, to explain to Mr. Lincoln that his district had been called on for four hundred soldiers under the first draft more than the legitimate quota of

the district he represented,—which, at the then prevailing rate of bounty, placed a burden on the district of three hundred and twenty thousand dollars in excess of what it ought to be. The Congressman apologized for seeming lack of patriotism in making complaint. The President, with a sternness he rarely displayed, replied,—

“Mr. S., apologies are not in order. The legitimate burdens of the war are heavy enough for the people to bear. A wrong has been done by somebody to your people. You must not leave Washington until that wrong is corrected. I will send for Provost-Marshal-General Fry at once. Call here at nine o’clock to-morrow.”

When the morrow came, General Fry had corrected the error, and had saved the — District three hundred and twenty thousand dollars. And Mr. Lincoln expressed as much joy over the result as the Congressman, who went home a happy man.

It had been represented to the President that the negro soldier would not fight. Quick as a flash Mr. Lincoln turned to the “doubting Thomas” and said,—

“The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts, under Colonel Shaw, was at Fort Wagner. The fighting was hot, and the firing from the fort was very disastrous to our boys. The colors were shot away, and the colonel asked for a man who would bring back the flag. A black soldier came forward and agreed to return with the flag. He crawled on his hands and knees, and, wrapping the colors around his body, crawled back, riddled with bullets. And three cheers went up for the color-bearer of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts. Do you tell me,” continued Mr. Lincoln, “that a black soldier won’t fight?” The visitor was silenced.

He cited another instance,—thus. A colonel on the eve of battle gave his color-bearer the regimental flag, saying, “Defend it, and protect it, die for it if need be, but never surrender it.” The black color-bearer replied, “Colonel, I will return this flag with honor, or *I will report to God the reason why.*” He died in defending the flag.

These instances were given by the President to show that courage does not depend on color.

After the fall of Vicksburg I witnessed a scene at the White House window which might yet become immortal on a painter’s canvas. Stanton had been spending the evening with Mr. Lincoln, when the full details of General Pemberton’s surrender reached the President.

Washington City was in a delirium of joy, and an impromptu serenade was organized, and an immense concourse of people came up to the White House. Mr. Lincoln said a few modest words, and then Stanton was loudly called for, and spoke with his wonted vigor and eloquence; and when he had finished, and the resounding cheers had died away, the great War Minister proposed, “Three cheers for our victorious army,” as Mr. Lincoln stood facing the crowd, from the west window of the Presidential mansion.

The cheers were given with a will, and the great patriot’s face was lighted with a smile.

He often jested about his own homeliness, but when in earnest conversation, and a smile overspread his face, he ceased to be homely.

As he sat near the open fireplace, he had a habit of pawing the

marble mantel with his great hands, forgetting himself in the absorbing interest of the question under discussion. There was nothing in him of what Tennyson calls "the stocks and blackboards of convention." He talked much of "plain people," because he was one of the plain people himself.

On the table near him he kept a package of blank cards, such as one finds on every hotel counter. On these were written, in lead-pencil, some of the most important orders of the war. Very often he would address Secretary Stanton with a pencilled request, "if the exigencies of the service would permit," to "let up on" some chaplain, civilian, or soldier who complained of the rough treatment of the Secretary of War. Stanton sometimes granted these requests, but just as often he would tear up the card in the face of the applicant and tell him to "go back to Mr. Lincoln and tell him he'd be d—d if he would do it." For the modern Carnot, in spite of his virtues and his solid Presbyterianism, could, when angered, swear like a moss-trooper.

When Lincoln would be again appealed to, he would simply look up, or down, on the victim of Stanton's wrath, and say, quizzically,—

"Well, I never did have much influence with this administration."

The good understanding between Lincoln and Stanton continued without a break during all the storm and stress period of the rebellion. Of John Hickman, of Pennsylvania, and of Secretary Stanton, I heard Lincoln say,—

"I have faith in affirmative men like these: they stand between a nation and perdition."

Mr. Lincoln had great fondness, during the earlier years of his administration, for John W. Forney, the founder of the *Press*, and for John Hickman, who for eight years was the Congressman from the West Chester District of Pennsylvania.

He had not been President six months when on one September day he alluded to his campaign speeches delivered in Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio, in September, 1859.

He said of John Hickman, "It was the Anti-Lecompton fight which made me President of the United States; and in that man Hickman's speeches nearly every sentence contains a thought." He then turned to a copy of his Columbus (O.) speech (delivered in September, 1859) and read these words:

"Fellow-Citizens,—Senator Douglas takes me to task for saying that this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. Yes, my friends, I did say this, and the Senator from Illinois threatens to squelch me at home, and is hungering and thirsting to squelch William H. Seward in New York for his expressions in regard to the irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery. But Roger A. Pryor, of Virginia, declared before I did, in the Richmond *Enquirer*, that this government could not exist half slave and half free. He used the same expressions which in us are so unpatriotic and heretical.\*

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\* In a personal note to the writer, Roger A. Pryor, now a successful lawyer in New York, admits using the expression "irrepressible conflict" before either Lincoln or Seward used it.

"But the Senator from Illinois never breathed a word against Roger A. Pryor, of Virginia.

"Since that time John Hickman, of Pennsylvania, has expressed the same sentiment. But he has never denounced Hickman. Why? Notwithstanding that opinion in the mouth of Hickman, he thinks Hickman may yet become a Douglas man."

Mr. Lincoln warmed up with the theme, and his great eyes flashed with unwonted fire as he proceeded :

"In my Columbus speech I desired to get down to the temper of the people and to test the depth of this Anti-Lecompton feeling, which boded no good to the Democracy. And I said to an immense Republican audience which contained many Democrats,—

"My friends, of all the Anti-Lecompton Democrats that have been brought to my notice, Hickman alone has the true, genuine ring of the metal, and, without endorsing what he says, I propose three cheers for the gallant Hickman, of Pennsylvania.'"

Mr. Lincoln said, with a glow of satisfaction and pleasure, "The whole audience rose and cheered lustily my sentiment."

He alluded to John Hickman's expression in front of Willard's Hotel to a crowd, when the Southern men were about to leave their seats in the Senate and in the House, and the West Chester Congressman said of General Winfield Scott, "I have little faith in an egg laid in Virginia and hatched in New Jersey." For that, and for saying that "John Brown and seventeen men and an old cow had frightened the State of Virginia out of her propriety," Edmundson, of Virginia, assaulted Hickman with a light cane in the House lobby. Northern Congressmen then became walking arsenals, and there were no further attempts made by the Hotspurs of personal violence.

Humor Bulwer defines as "strength's rich superfluousness,"—an unsatisfactory definition ; but Mr. Lincoln had abundant wit as well as overflowing humor, but his wit never had taint of malice in it. He once said, "Sentiment goes further than thought ;" and his friendship or his affections once enlisted were unchangeable. Governor Newell, now of Washington Territory, attended Mr. Lincoln's youngest child, who died, and the governor became one of his closest friends, and was mainly instrumental in procuring the appointment of Hon. Thomas H. Dudley as consul to Liverpool, then, as now, one of the very best offices in the gift of the government. Mr. Lincoln desired this appointment for a very near friend of his in Illinois. Governor Newell begged the place for Dudley, to whom Mr. Lincoln was profoundly grateful. But he hesitated, and finally, signing Dudley's commission, said, in his quaint good-natured way (still thinking of his Illinois friend), "Well, Newell, I am like a farmer with a bundle of 'fodder' between two asses ; and the wrong ass gets the fodder." The friendship between Lincoln and Dudley continued till the President's death, and was strengthened by the good work Consul Dudley did in breaking up Confederate privateering and blockade-running during the war.

I told the President, during his second campaign, of the tender and affectionate respect in which he was held by the masses in the great interior counties of Pennsylvania, in which almost half of the voting

population had kissed their wives and babes and gone off for thirteen dollars a month to face death with fatal determination for one flag and one country. How his great eyes flashed with pleasure, later on, and his sad countenance lighted up and became almost beautiful, as he produced one of my old letters, in which I informed him that an old Methodist preacher said, "It's all up with Hiester Clymer for governor, because the young Methodist preachers have taken the stump for 'Linkum,' and the boys and gals in the oil country are a-wearing Linkum and Curtin rosettes." I had telegraphed him, much to his joy, at a time when the two great armies of brothers in internecine strife faced each other north and south like two spent swimmers,—I had telegraphed from Pittsburg the night before the State election in 1863,—

"PRESIDENT LINCOLN,—

"Have no fears for the result. The country is still for one flag, which floating over our cradle will float above our graves. Pennsylvania will endorse your administration by twenty thousand majority."

My prediction was true, within five hundred votes. When I met him my first question was, "Well, Mr. Lincoln, how goes the war?"

His reply was, "Oh, we're still pegging away at the rebels."

"But the Lord is on our side," I answered, "and we must surely win the fight."

The sad, far-away look, so familiar to the face of this great many-sided patriot, came again to his countenance as he answered,—

"And are you sure that the Lord is on our side? I sometimes doubt it."

He was naturally a doubter. He had a "spirit touched to fine issues," and felt keenly and intensely for the woes of others. During the spring following Curtin's re-election as governor of Pennsylvania, I found the President, fresh as the May morning, looking out of the east window of the White House, on the fragrant, opening bloom of the lilac-bushes beneath his window. Only that day he had received assurance that the spirit of nationality had proved stronger than the power of faction, and was fully informed that Chase, Ben Wade, and "Pathfinder" Fremont were all out of the Presidential race, and his nomination before the June Convention to be held at Baltimore would be practically unanimous. As I entered the room, he rose and pushed a chair, with his feet, across the room, close to his own. There was a suspicious moisture in his eyes as he grasped both of my hands in both of his own (a habit of Mr. Lincoln's when greatly moved by joy or sorrow). "God bless you, young man!" he exclaimed: "how glad I am you came! This is the happiest day of my life; for I no longer doubt the practical unanimity of the people, who are willing I should have the chance to finish the big job I undertook nearly four years ago."

He pulled out of his pocket a letter from that grand old man Robert J. Breckenridge, the sturdy patriot of Kentucky (who was the temporary President of the Baltimore Convention, at which Mr. Lincoln was renominated). In this letter Mr. Breckenridge assured him that the rebellion was like an empty egg-shell and would soon be broken. The Kentucky preacher-statesman also assured Mr. Lincoln

of the certainty of his being chosen at Baltimore, and of his triumphant re-election. Taking up the letter, Mr. Lincoln said,—

“The strangest feature, to my mind, in this terrible war between brothers is that outside of Pettigrew, of South Carolina, Parson Brownlow, of Tennessee, and Bob Breckenridge, of Kentucky, I can name on the fingers of one hand the other great names of the men down in Dixie who have dared anything to save the Union of our fathers.”

Changing the subject, the President said, “I have done something this morning which has roused the ire of Secretary Stanton.” I expressed my desire to know what it was. He continued,—

“Congressman Dennison, of Pennsylvania, came to me this morning with the mother of John Russell, a soldier who was to be shot in forty-eight hours for insubordination, and I gave a peremptory order pardoning the soldier and restoring him to his regiment.

“At a recent battle, in the face of the enemy, John Russell’s captain ran away. When the battle was over, in which half of the company were lost, this soldier met his captain, and, walking up to him, rifle in hand, he said, ‘Captain —, you are a d—d coward, and ought to be shot for cowardice.’ The captain pulled out his revolver and attempted to kill Russell, who aimed his rifle at the captain’s head. They were separated. The captain preferred charges of insubordination against the soldier, and a subservient court-martial promptly sentenced Russell to be shot, and did not even censure the cowardly officer. Congressman Dennison has just given me all the facts in the case, and I have just made the poor mother happy by saving her boy.” And with compressed lips he went on, “And I did more: I dismissed the cowardly captain from the army.”

John Russell still lives to tell this story, how the great commander-in-chief of our army and navy saved his life. He re-enlisted at the end of his term of service, and fought to the end of the war, and yet wears his “wounds and honors a’ front.”

The bravest are the tenderest, and Coleridge used to say that the greatest men of the earth are those who possess the feminine element of character. This tenderness of nature was part of the warp and woof of the immortal rail-splitter and statesman of Illinois. Another incident illustrates my meaning.

Two boys ran away from their parents, while under age, and enlisted in the navy. The parents made many ineffectual efforts to get their sons discharged. They finally got an audience with Mr. Lincoln,—no easy matter, under the pressure of the President’s manifold duties and engagements. The parents said that the worst fault of the boys was their disobedience to the paternal commands. Mr. Lincoln listened patiently to the story of the anxious fathers. He made no answer to their earnest appeals for the boys’ discharge, but, reaching over to the adjoining table, picked up a blank card and wrote these words:

“SECRETARY WELLES,—

“The United States don’t need the services of boys who disobey their parents. Let both Snyder and Ratcliffe be discharged.

“(Signed)

A. LINCOLN.”

That card can yet be found, and the parents of the runaway boys often tell the tale as one of Abe Lincoln's jokes; but the joke was on the boys, not on the sweet-spirited and lovable President.

The infrequent quarrels Mr. Lincoln had with the grim Stanton, of the War Department, grew out of his exceeding tenderness in yielding to the quality of mercy, and Lincoln would only smile at the wrath of the great War Minister when he charged the President with utterly demoralizing the army by his provoking lenity to deserters and men sentenced to be shot for sleeping at their post or for some minor act of neglect or insubordination. And Lincoln could boast, with Pericles, that by no act of his own had he ever caused a citizen of his country to put on mourning.

To President Lincoln poetry was the fairest side of truth. He was, withal, a philosopher, and one of his favorite passages, which he often repeated, was from Gibbon's "Philosophical Reflections": "A being of the nature of man, endowed with the same faculties, but with a larger measure of existence, would cast down a smile of pity and contempt on the crimes and follies of human ambition, so eager in a narrow space to grasp at a precarious and short-lived enjoyment. It is thus that the experience of history exalts and enlarges the horizon of our intellectual view. In a composition of some days, in a perusal of some hours, six hundred years have rolled away, and the duration of a life or reign is contracted to a fleeting moment. *The grave is ever beside the throne:* the success of a criminal is almost instantly followed by the loss of his prize, and our immortal reason survives and despairs the sixty phantoms of kings who have passed before our eyes and faintly dwell upon our remembrance."

Lincoln's great soul was the Peak of Teneriffe, which caught like a sunburst the lofty tops of human thought while contemporary statesmen groped in the darkness of the valleys below. His Philadelphia speech on his way to the inauguration was the key to the unselfish and pathetic self-abnegation of his pure and lofty life. And he died in battle, as did the common soldier, slain by a dastard, in defence of the rights of man, imperishable and imprescriptible.

To see and know Abraham Lincoln unreservedly in his daily life, as I did, was to feel that

All Paradise could by the simple opening of a door  
Let itself in upon him.

When we think of his apotheosis, so soon after he had walked hand in hand with his little son "Tad" Lincoln in the streets of Richmond, we think that he may have died in the right hour for his fame. But the reflection is forced upon us, Must the triumphant road of justice be forever watered with tears? Being dead, he still liveth; for Abraham Lincoln was the kind of statesman that stands between a nation and perdition.

*James M. Scovel.*

